

Creating a Family Disaster Plan

The development of a Family Disaster Plan will help to minimize the potential impact of a disaster event and perhaps even prevent injuries and/or loss of life. The development of a Family Disaster Plan involves the following steps:

Develop an emergency communications plan for your family

- In case members of your family are in separate locations during a disaster event, it is important that you collectively understand how to contact each other.
- Designate an out-of-state point of contact if there is an emergency.
- Make sure that every household member has the telephone numbers (home, work, cell phone) and e-mail address for that contact, and for each other. Leave these contact numbers at your children's schools and at your workplace.

Develop a family evacuation plan

- Determine the best escape routes from your home.
- Determine where you will meet if your home is impacted by a disaster. Designate one location near your home and a second location within the community.
- If your community is impacted by a major disaster, it is likely that local officials will establish shelters in public buildings. Contact your local emergency management office for a copy of community evacuation plans. This plan should include information on the safest routes to shelters.
- Make special accommodations and plans for family members or individuals with disabilities. (See Section 2.6)
- Make special accommodations or plans for your pets. (See Section 2.7)

Meet with your family to discuss your disaster plan

- Explain why you need to prepare for disasters.
- Explain the dangers of different disaster threats.
- Explain what to do in each case.
- Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1 for emergency help.
- Show each family member how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at the main switches. Discuss when it is appropriate to do this.

Practice and maintain your plan

- Ask questions to make sure your family remembers meeting places, phone numbers, and safety rules.
- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.

Adapted from resource material developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency entitled “Are You Ready?: A Guide to Citizen Preparedness”